

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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DEPARTMENT PASS SECRETARY

ALEXANDRIA FOR AMBASSADOR EILTS

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PEPR US EG IS XF
SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN FIRST REACTIONS TO NEWS OF CAMP DAVID
- SUMMIT

SUMMARY. EARLY CAIRO REACTION TO LAST NIGHT'S ANNOUNCE-
MENT OF TRIPARTITE MEETING AT CAMP DAVID IS OVER-
WHELMINGLY FAVORABLE, AT TIMES VERGING ON EUPHORIC.
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EGYPTIAN INTELLECTUALS, OFFICIALS AND MILITARY
WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED BELIEVE SADAT'S OPPOSITION TO
"TALKS FOR THEIR OWN SAKE" FORCED U.S. INTO MORE ACTIVE
ROLE, AND THEY WELCOME U.S. "FULL PARTNERSHIP" IN NEGO-
TIATIONS. THERE IS A SKEPTICAL UNDERCURRENT, PAR-
TICULARLY AMONG NEWS PEOPLE AND FOREIGN DIPLOMATS, BUT
THE MAINSTREAM IS DEFINITELY RELIEF AND SATISFACTION.

END SUMMARY.

1. WHILE WE HAVE NOT TAKEN A WIDESPREAD SAMPLING OF EGYPTIAN OPINION SINCE LAST NIGHT'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESUMED DIRECT TALKS, WE HAVE SPOKEN WITH PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND PROFESSIONAL BACK- GROUND AND HAVE FOUND A PATTERN OF OPINION THAT IS HIGHLY SUPPORTIVE OF SADAT'S DECISION TO GO TO CAMP DAVID. THE FOCUS HAS BEEN ON AMERICA'S EMERGENCE AS A "FULL PARTNER" IN THE PEACE PROCESS. (THIS PHRASE FIGURED IN AUGUST 9 CAIRO PRESS HEADLINES--ALTHOUGH OFFICIAL EDITORIAL COMMENT ON THE NEW DEVELOPMENTS HAS NOT YET APPEARED.)

2. REACTION OF MOST POLITICALLY AWARE EGYPTIANS IS SATISFACTION THAT U.S. WILL PLAY A MORE ACTIVE ROLE AND RELIEF THAT THERE IS STILL HOPE FOR SADAT'S INITIATIVE. AN OFT-REPEATED COMMENT IS, "CARTER MUST HAVE REALLY DECIDED TO GET INVOLVED, OR ELSE SADAT WOULD NEVER HAVE AGREED TO GO." BEHIND THIS SEEMS TO BE A CERTAIN PRIDE IN WHAT THEY SEE AS SADAT'S SUCCESSFUL BRINKSMANSHIP. ONE FACTOR THAT MAY HAVE REINFORCED PEOPLE'S SATISFAC- TION AT THE SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME IN ALEXANDRIA IS A FEEL- ING THAT GREW EARLIER IN THE WEEK THAT THE TALKS WERE BOUND TO FAIL. THIS PESSIMISM WAS IN PART BASED ON RUMORS THAT EGYPT WAS RESISTING U.S. EFFORTS TO ARRANGE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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A SECOND MEETING BETWEEN SADAT AND THE SECRETARY.

3. EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS AND MILITARY OFFICERS WITH WHOM WE HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH HAVE BEEN UNIFORMLY UPBEAT. FOREIGN OFFICE PEOPLE WERE PERHAPS MOST WORRIED BEFORE, AND ARE NOW MOST RELIEVED. MINISTER OF TRANSPORT TOLD ACTING DIRECTOR OF AID THAT HE HAD EARLIER ATTENDED A MEETING OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ON ANOTHER MATTER. THEIR CONSENSUS WAS THAT THE DAY'S EVENTS SHOWED A CHANGE WAS TAKING PLACE IN AMERICA'S WILLING- NESS TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED IN ME NEGOTIATIONS--AND THIS WAS MOST WELCOME.

4. VOICES OF CYNICISM COME NOT UNEXPECTEDLY FROM NEWSPEOPLE AND ARAB HANDS IN DIPLOMATIC CORPS, WHO SEE CAMP DAVID MEETING AS MORE SHOW THAN SUBSTANCE. AHRAH POLITICAL EDITOR HAMDI FUAD, FOR ONE, IS PEDDLING STORY THAT ISRAELI RETURN OF EL ARISH IS QUID PRO QUO FOR SADAT'S AGREEMENT TO FURTHER DIRECT TALKS. ANOTHER REPORTER REMARKED THAT SADAT BADLY NEEDED A WAY TO SAVE FACE, AND THE U.S. WAS KINDLY PROVIDING IT.

5. COMMENT: THE PROSPECT OF TALKS NEXT MONTH WITH THE U.S. AS A FULL PARTNER HAS SEEMINGLY REINFORCED SADAT'S POSITION AND INCREASED EGYPTIAN CONFIDENCE IN THE U.S. ROLE. EXPECTATIONS ARE VERY HIGH. EILTS

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